

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 110238

FOLLOWING DACCA 2700 ACTION SECSTATE INFO RANGOON MAY 1

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2700

DEPT PASS AID/ASIA AND AID/OFDA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR BM BG SREF

SUBJECT: MUSLIM REFUGEES FROM BURMA

1. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TOLD ME AT A RECEPTION TODAY (MAY 1) THAT TOMORROW HE WOULD VISIT THE BURMESE BORDER AREAS WHERE MUSLIM REFUGEES ARE CROSSING AND WOULD CALL ME IN FOR A FURTHER BRIEFING ON WEDNESDAY. HE SAID ONLY THAT HE WISHED TO KEEP THE USG INFORMED. HE ALSO SAID THAT AFTER A TWO-WEEK DELAY THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT HAS ACCEPTED THE BDG OFFER TO SEND A TEAM TO RANGOON. THE TEAM WILL BE HEADED BY THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND INCLUDE THE DIRECTOR OF THE BANGLADESH RIFLES; IT WILL LEAVE WITHIN SEVERAL DAYS. THE BURMESE HAVE AGREED THAT THEY WILL DISCUSS WITH THE TEAM THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH LOCAL CIVIL AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES ON THE BORDER MIGHT MEET. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THEY WOULD ALSO DISCUSS THE BROADER CAUSES OF THE MIGRATION.
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HE CLAIMED THAT PRESS ACCOUNTS OF THE REFUGEE INFLUX WERE GENERALLY ACCURATE, ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT VOUCH FOR THE NUMBERS BEING REPORTED.

2. WHILE THERE HAS BEEN NO SUGGESTION FROM THE BDG THAT THE USG INVOLVE ITSELF, I WOULD PLAN TO REPEAT MY COMMENTS ABOUT THE VIRTUES OF WORKING OUT A SOLUTION THROUGH

DIRECT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS. I HAVE HEARD SOME PRIVATE COMMENT ON VIOLATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE REFUGEES AND IT SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE THE BDG MAY MAKE THIS POINT SOON.

3. IF I AM ASKED FOR RELIEF I WILL OF COURSE RESPOND THAT I WILL CONVEY THE REQUEST TO THE DEPARTMENT. IF A RELIEF PROGRAM OF ANY MAGNITUDE BECOMES A NECESSITY I WOULD BE INCLINED TO SEEK SOME INTERNATIONAL UMBRELLA FOR ITS COORDINATION. I UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT NO INTERNATIONAL BODY NOW IN BANGLADESH HAS THE CAPABILITY OF MONITORING THE RELIEF, AND, SHOULD WE BECOME INVOLVED IN ANY PROGRAM, AMERICAN AID OFFICERS WOULD HAVE TO VISIT THE REFUGEE CAMPS.

4. THERE IS NO NEED TO MAKE ANY DECISIONS NOW BUT IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS ANY FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE LINE I SHOULD TAKE WITH THE FOREIGN SECRETARY I WOULD WELCOME THEM. SCHNEIDER.
UNQUOTE VANCE

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